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cording to rational insight. The mediæval ethics adds to the idea of ethics that of human history as a constituent, but it remains in a discord within itself (not reconciling the secular and the religious). Ethics, since Kant, has become universal in its scope, like that of Plato and Aristotle, since it has the social life for its content; but, in addition to this, it has also an ethical historical element, for in history freedom attains objectivity in the realization of its ends. It is not involved in a mere process of becoming without attainment of being, but it has found the way that leads to the goal."

THE EDITOR.

*SOCIAL SCIENCE.—INFANT EDUCATION.*

[In our January number we printed the circular of Mrs. Talbot, Secretary of the Educational Committee of the American Social Science Association. The following letter has been received from Mr. Darwin on the subject of interest.—EDITOR.]

BECKENHAM, KENT, RAILWAY STATION, ORPINGTON, }  
S.—E. R., July 19, 1881.

DEAR MADAM: In response to your wish, I have much pleasure in expressing the interest which I feel in your proposed investigation on the mental and bodily development of infants. Very little is at present accurately known on this subject, and I believe that isolated observations will add but little to our knowledge; whereas, tabulated results from a very large number of observations systematically made would probably throw much light on the sequence and period of development of the several faculties.

This knowledge would probably give a foundation for some improvement in our education of young children, and would show us whether the same system ought to be followed in all cases.

I will venture to specify a few points of inquiry which, as it seems to me, possess some scientific interest. For instance, does the education of the parents influence the mental powers of their children at any age, either at a very early or somewhat more advanced stage? This could, perhaps, be learned by schoolmasters or mistresses, if a large number of children were first classed according to age and their mental attainments, and afterward in accordance with the education of their parents, as far as this could be discovered.

As observation is one of the earliest faculties developed in young children, and as this power would probably be exercised in an equal degree by the children of educated and uneducated persons, it seems not impossible that any transmitted effect from education could be displayed only at a somewhat advanced age. It would be desirable to test statistically in a similar manner the truth of the often-repeated statement that colored children at first learn as quickly as white children, but that they afterward fall off in progress.

If it could be proved that education acted not only on the individual, but by transmission on the race—this would be a great encouragement to all working on this all-important subject. It is well known that children sometimes exhibit at a very early age strong special tastes, for which no cause can be assigned, although occasionally

they may be accounted for by reversion to the taste or occupation of some progenitor; and it would be interesting to learn how far such early tastes are persistent and influence the future career of the individual. In some instances such tastes die away without apparently leaving any after-effect; but it would be desirable to know how far this is commonly the case, as we should then know whether it were important to direct, as far as this is possible, the early tastes of our children. It may be more beneficial that a child should follow energetically some pursuit of however trifling a nature, and thus acquire perseverance, than that he should be turned from it, because of no future advantage to him.

I will mention one other small point of inquiry in relation to very young children which may possibly prove important with respect to the origin of language; but it could be investigated only by persons possessing an accurate musical ear. Children, even before they can articulate, express some of their feelings and desires by noises uttered in different notes. For instance, they make an interrogative noise and others of assent and dissent in different tones; and it would, I think, be worth while to ascertain whether there is any uniformity in different children in the pitch of their voices under various frames of mind.

I fear that this letter can be of no use to you; but it will serve to show my sympathy and good wishes in your researches.

I beg leave to remain, dear madam, yours faithfully,

CHARLES DARWIN.

To MRS. EMILY TALBOT.

### *THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.*

The Philosophy of Religion must be acknowledged on all hands as the most important work of the human intellect. In explaining religion as a phenomenon of human life, it is found necessary to expound the idea of the first principle of the world—the absolute. In defining his idea of the absolute, man defines his idea of his own origin and destiny, and the idea of the relation which he holds to nature and to the absolute. All practical activity of man is conditioned through this idea of the absolute. Man's immortality and freedom are conditioned directly through the nature of God. If God is an unconscious natural power, man can have no other destiny than to be absorbed at some time into this unconscious power, and lose his individual being. Indeed, on the hypothesis of an unconscious first principle, it is impossible to explain how a conscious being ever came to exist at all. For consciousness is directive power, and the rationality which manifests itself in consciousness is an indefinitely growing potency in the control of the world, perpetually imposing its own forms on brute matter, and subordinating it to the service of man just as if man had made it originally for his own use. The hasty and general outlook is sufficient to give the presumption that the absolute is not only an all-powerful might, but an all-knowing might. The one most important truth of all is the truth in regard to the resemblance or differ-